



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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Budget must address need for rural health hubs

The Executive Director of the National Rural Health Alliance, Gordon Gregory, has called on the Rudd Government to make substantial new health investment on two key fronts in the 2010-11 Budget.

“Major investments are needed in selected regional centres so that they become comprehensive service hubs, with additional resource made available for small towns of up to 12,000 people. The result would be better access to integrated health care services at a regional level, and to primary and aged care in smaller towns,” Mr Gregory said.

“We urge the government to confidently select and build the health service capacity of key places in rural, regional and remote areas, just as they have done through superclinics – mainly in outer metropolitan areas. We are not talking about building the same health service model as with the superclinics, but using the same process of selective investment.

“People in rural and remote areas need a central service within their community of interest which is well enough staffed, and has sufficient physical resources, to provide comprehensive regional care by reaching out to smaller communities,” he said.

“Substantial new resources are required, particularly given the difficulty of attracting health professionals to rural and remote areas. The alternative is to leave people in those areas with poorer health and poorer access to services, which is simply not acceptable.”

The Alliance’s 2010 Budget Submission also proposes direct Commonwealth investment in an improved patients’ assisted travel scheme, and particular measures to improve the oral health workforce and maternity services in the bush.

It also proposes a dedicated rural/remote health research stream and a ‘Broadband for all’ initiative to ensure equal IT access for those who cannot be serviced by fibre-to-the-home or office.

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